DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 405 EA 029 634

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TITLE Using Student Produced Video Presentations in Administrator Preparation Programs.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the South Regional Council on Education Administration (Savannah, GA, November, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Critical Thinking; *Educational Facilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Management Development; *School Administration; School Buildings; Supervisory Training; *Videotape Recordings

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at students' video recordings of school-facility assessment that were produced in graduate courses for administrator development. Graduate administrator-preparation programs usually include one or more courses focusing on school housing or school-plant operations. Educators preparing school leaders need to explore ways to train future educators to think efficiently in typically complex environments. By using student-produced VCR recordings and by following assessment checklists, students can use these video checklists to ensure building safety. Such recordings can be used to supplement existing teaching methodology. The incorporation of video recording to assess educational facilities enables school leaders to better understand the various compliance and safety issues in today's schools. To help in this effort, the Council of Educational Facility Planners International has developed an inspection program consisting of 106 criteria to be used when assessing educational facilities. It is hoped that by experiencing a performance task of video recording to assess educational facilities, school leaders will grasp the various compliance and safety issues in today's schools. (RJM)

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Based on a paper presented at the Annual Conference, Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration, Savannah, GA, November, 1998.

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Background

Graduate administrator preparation programs usually include one or more courses focusing on school housing or school plant operations. This is due largely to administrator licensure or certification requirements mandated by many states. Additionally, Owens (1998) contends that the influences of the scientific management techniques of the early part of this century caused programs of study for the preparation of administrators to include heating and ventilating, and methods of performing janitorial services and sanitation tasks. He states that the early scientific management approach is still viewed by many today as the proper way to manage school facilities. This could include superintendents and school boards who hire building level administrators and monitor and evaluate their performance and would want administrators to be knowledgeable and conversant in school facility management.

According to Argon (1992), many educators interested in school reform have ignored the role of school facilities and student learning. Citing the vast need of building upgrades throughout the country, he argues that school facilities have taken a back seat to instruction and governing issues. Argon (1992) is not alone in his focus on the impact of school facilities on students, teachers and the community.

Earthmann (1995) began his study of the relationship between student achievement and school building condition by stating that almost every educator will agree that a well maintained school building is essential for a proper learning environment. He found that the condition of educational facilities directly influenced students and how they achieve and behave. He asserts that the condition of the buildings rests ultimately upon the financial ability of the school system and the desire of the school board to have buildings in good shape. The actual management of the

facility is still a building level task for the new as well as seasoned administrator.

According to Chan and Morgan (1996), school safety issues are a main concern for administrators. They examined school housing in two main areas: school site and school building safety. School site they define as the school location, the playground, the equipment, the site drainage and all outdoor school facilities. Safety in the school building itself included the structure, fire protection, the means of egress, the emergency exits and all the school building systems. They conclude that it is not difficult to associate unsafe elements with older school facilities. Administrators have little control over the building to which they are assigned, but must still ensure student safety none the less.

Traditional course delivery of graduate administration preparation programs has been recently expanded to include distance learning, the use of multimedia personal computers, CD-ROM and faster modems as well as access to the Internet. Mirowski (1997) states that the emergence of the new electronic strategies compels educators to take advantage of these additional pedagogical tools. No longer is the teacher-centered, delivery of information considered adequate for preparing students regardless of age (Simonson and Thompson 1997).

Educators preparing school leaders need to explore ways to train future educators to think efficiently though their environment may be staggeringly complex (Sergiovanni, 1996). Included in today's complex environment are many compliance issues. Among them are: fire codes, public health and sanitation codes, safety and security criteria and accessibility issues related to educational facility and school administration. It is not uncommon for school districts to have risk management offices that produce documents guiding administrators in addressing issues such as theater safety. (Fairfax County Public Schools, 1995). A key element of their theater safety

program is the requirement to conduct in-depth inspections of theater facilities.

In the 1990's, greater concern for disabled persons and new laws made accessibility an issue for school administrators. Gran & King (1990) discuss problems faced in providing the disabled with the teaching/learning environment they require. A facility inspection can help schools conform to guidelines required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), while also addressing the needs of the disabled. One part of ADA is the Title II requirement to conduct self-evaluations and develop written plans for removing structural barriers. Otten (1996) states that such inspections are most effective when done in teams and suggests including individuals with disabilities during the walk-through.

As an adjunct teaching aid, video recordings have varied uses. They can be used to present lectures in almost any subject area. For instance, in the field of teaching dermatology and oral medicine, Mirowski (1997) uses videos to allow students to observe a mentor or individuals with more advanced training, perform complicated medical treatment. It is one of a number of pedagogical tools that are used in the physician preparation program.

Implementation

Student-produced videos can be used as instructional methodology in programs for beginning administrators or for furthering the professional growth of experienced administrators. It relies heavily on the students making their own VCR recordings and following assessment checklists. The checklists can be those used by the various code writers or be developed by the students themselves as they assess K-12 facilities.

With frequent budget constraints, increases in electronic trends in clinical education and increased concerns regarding the condition of schools in mind, the use of student produced video

recordings of school facility assessment in graduate courses for administrator development is appealing. It can supplement existing teaching methodology. There are several reasons for this suggestion. First, many states already require a graduate course in the study of education facilities and these courses are in place using traditional delivery. By experiencing a performance task of video recording to assess educational facilities, school leaders will better understand the various compliance and safety issues in today's schools and improve the existing school facility graduate coursework. Next, students of educational administration will see the connection between facility conditions and how it directly affects learning (Moseley-Braun, 1997; Chan & Morgan, 1996; Earthman, 1995). Lastly, growing negligence litigation against school districts demonstrates that all school personnel should be knowledgeable about the inspection of facilities and grounds. Dunklee and Shoop (1986) call school facilities' negligence a minefield fraught with litigation. They caution that the inspection of facilities and grounds have been defined by the courts as a general responsibility that must be fulfilled daily. The building administrator will have to be well-versed in facilities management to conduct these inspections. Additionally, Chan and Morgan (1996) suggest the development of action plans to immediately identify and address unsafe conditions that may emerge.

The Council of Educational Facility Planners International has developed an inspection program consisting of 106 criteria to be used when assessing educational facilities (Hawkins ans Lilley, 1991). It is included in the comprehensive and authoritative, *Guide to Planning Educational Facilities* (1991). In their historical review the authors found that one common factor of school housing is that perspective reflects philosophy that changes over time. The exhaustive checklist covering the six major areas of facility management are the basis for the

inspection checklist used in the student production of the videotapes.

Two important considerations are necessary in order to understand how coursework related to public school housing and facilities has been recently affected; changing educational philosophy and efforts to account for differing learning styles. Educational philosophy has affected housing considerations such as building size, location, materials, and instructional arrangement. Focus of attention has shifted from teacher to students and their individual needs as evident in research. Gone are the once popular benches and tables, individual desks in straight rows, wood burning furnaces, and limited spaces. In present times we have advanced to viewing the school building as a public building, housing students in classrooms designed to meet their needs in order to enhance their experiences both educationally and in extra-curricular activities (Lowe, 1991).

Learning styles of students play an important role in school housing-related decisions as well. For example furniture used is of a variety such as tables and chairs, desks, bean bags, sofas, etc. arranged in a variety of ways such as circular, pairs, small groups, semi-circular, etc. Also room and space for state of the art laboratories, computer stations and other special interest courses are available. Space and accommodation for not only students with special needs, but extra curricular activities are commonly found on school grounds. In reality, these buildings now more than ever are customized to meet individual needs of the students (Hawkins, 1991).

Adult learning theory advocates giving adults problems (in this context compliance issues) that link learning to their workplace and their immediate needs. Brain research reveals that most growth occurs when one is involved in a challenging, but non-threatening activity. This instructional strategy blends the workplace and challenge by using the student generated VCR recordings to help teach inspection and assessment of educational facilities and various

compliance and legal issues. Additionally, the "proster theory" (Hart, 1992) asserts that the upper most part of the human brain functions best when the environment is supportive and non-threatening. Students producing videos of school inspection can work at a leisurely pace and reflect on the progress of the inspection. In fact, much research on the workday of administrators both in and outside the school environment indicates that their work is so fragmented and choppy that often reflection is not possible within a work day (Mintzberg, 1993; Morris, et. al., 1984; Stewart, 1982; Barth, 1980 and Sproul, 1976). For this very reason, reflection should be encouraged so that administrators may build a habit of learning from their own experience when the pressures of time are relaxed (Abbott, 1997; Wilson, 1993; Barnett and Bill, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1987; and Schon, 1987). Typically, students walk through a facility and assess its educational functionality. After collaboration and discussion they award a numerical score for strengths and weaknesses observed. If the students participating in the classes use the assessment tool developed from the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International, they simply total up points to evaluate the educational facility in the K-12 setting. Using the student-produced videos takes the collaborative assessment one step further. Participant assessors use video recording to demonstrate their mastery of the 106 criteria (from the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International, checksheet) showing violations. Further activities could include the development of inspection checklists for various fire codes, public health and sanitation codes, safety and security criteria and accessibility compliance issues as determined by their instructor. Questions like these can be answered by implementing this teaching strategy in graduate education courses.

What are the necessary fire codes, public health and sanitation codes, safety and security

criteria and accessibility issues related to educational facility assessment and school administration?

How do you apply these various criteria to educational facilities and administration?

Can you spot fire, health and safety code violations when viewing a VCR recording of a facility assessment?

Summary

The push for effective schools is evident across the nation. School housing issues are sometimes taken for granted and not considered a concern of high priority. Identifying the factors that can and will have an affect on educational opportunities will put the importance of school facilities into the proper prospective. The use of inspections and reflective analyses are valuable tools for today's administrators. This has explained and advocated the use of student produced video recordings of school facility assessment in graduate courses for administrator development. By experiencing a performance task of video recording to assess educational facilities, school leaders will better understand the various compliance and safety issues in today's schools.

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